(b) Import of cotton for the last five years is given below:

(Qty. in lakh bales of 170 kg. each)

Year	Import of Cotton
1997-98	4.13
1998-99	7.87
1999-2000	22.01
2000-2001	22.13
2001-2002	24.70
2002-2003 (Anticipated)	20.00

Cotton imports have increased from 4.13 lakh bales in 1997-98 to 24.7 lakh bales in 2001-02.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. Government has taken note of the continuous increase in imports and its effect on domestic cotton crop. The increase in cotton imports is due to (i) cotton being placed under OGL (Open General License) from April, 1994 so that cotton mills can import cotton of any staple/variety from any country without quantitative limit, (ii) tight supply position of cotton in the country leading to increase in domestic prices and (iii) continuous decline in international cotton prices and disparity with domestic prices which were higher than international cotton prices.

(e) to (g) To discourage higher cotton imports Government has doubled the import duty on cotton from 5% *ad valorem* to 10% *ad valorem*, with effect from 9th January, 2002.

Funds for safety in Railways

*74. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether in an effort to curb the rising number of accidents, the Railways have increased spending on safety related matters;

(b) whether General Managers of Zonal Railways will have more funds at their disposal for this purpose; and

(c) if so, what amount they would have now and what was the limit of funds previously?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir. With a view to wipe out the arrears of replacements and renewals of over-aged assets on the Railways, the Government has set up a non-lapsable Special Railway Safety Fund of Rs. 17,000 crore with effect from October 1, 2001. In 2001-02, the net expenditure under SRSF was Rs. 1434 crore as against Rs. 1400 crore initially budgeted. In 2002-03, as against a budget estimate of Rs. 2210 crore the net expenditure as per revised estimates would be Rs. 2310 crore. The net expenditure on safety related plan heads from sources other than SRSF has been Rs. 1328.36 crore in 2001-02 and is expected to be Rs. 1803.92 crore in the 2002-03 RE. Take this into account, the total safety related expenditure has been Rs. 2762.64 crore in 2001-02 and in 2002-03 would be Rs. 4113.92 crore as per the RE.

(b) and (c) The General Managers of Zonal Railways have been delegated with more powers for incurring expenditure on safety related works under plan heads bridge works, signalling and telecommunication and track renewals. The General Managers can now sanction upto Rs. 50 lakh per item as compared to Rs. 30 lakh per item earlier under the specified plan heads. The annual financial ceiling has also been increased from Rs. 6 crore to Rs. 10 crore per annum. The General Managers are to exercise these powers within the overall Budget allotment.

Pollution in Yamuna

*76. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE:
SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU):

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that pollution in the Yamuna River has reached a very high level;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Hon'ble Supreme Court issued a set of directives some time back for the reduction of pollution level of that river;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether the same have been fully implemented; and